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SUBJECT: HUNGARY H1N1 UPDATE: CLINICAL TRIALS OF VACCINE BEGIN;  
SZIGET MUSIC FESTIVAL CONCLUDES WITH SMALL NUMBER OF NEW H1N1 CASES

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¶1. The Hungarian Pharmaceutical company Omninvest has announced that clinical trials of its H1N1 vaccine have begun. In an August 14 press interview, Omninvest's Director, Ferenc Zimonyi, said the tests, taking place at clinics in the towns of Veszprem and Pilisvorosvar, had begun that day. They will focus on three age groups: adults (testing underway); children and youth ages three to eighteen years; and infants and young children ages six months to three years (testing for all under age 18 to begin at the end of August). The participating clinics will send all test results to the National Pharmaceutical Institute which will then issue a decision on distributing the vaccine for public use.

¶2. In an August 17 interview with the Hungarian daily Vilaggazdasag, Dr Ferenc Falus, Hungary's Chief Medical Officer, said GOH planning is based on an assumption that the next H1N1 wave would arrive in Hungary 4-6 weeks after its appearance in France and Great Britain. Dr. Falus' office has responsibility for developing a logistical plan to administer the expected 6 million H1N1 vaccine doses (as well as the 1.3 million doses of seasonal flu vaccine expected to be given this autumn). While an official timeline is not yet ready, some doctors, in comments to the press, have speculated that it would take 5 weeks to administer all vaccinations.

¶3. Separately, the annual Sziget Rock Festival, which drew about 400,000 people from all over Europe, took place in Budapest August 12-17. Contrary to some concerns raised prior to the festival that the venue could pose a risk for spreading H1N1, only a very small number of confirmed or suspected cases were reported. The Festival organizers, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, deployed 400 health professionals to the festival grounds, and set up an on-site clinic specializing in respiratory problems as well as a round-the-clock pharmacy. In an August 16 statement, the Ministry of Health's forensic expert reported that 11 possible H1N1 cases had been detected at Sziget. Of this, two were confirmed positive, two were confirmed negative, and seven specimens are still being examined at the National Epidemiologic Center. All were foreign visitors and the patients had been hospitalized for medical observation.

¶4. To date the Public Health Authority has registered 125 confirmed cases of H1N1 in Hungary, with one death.

Levine